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ABSTRACT

Leadership and the need for middle-level administrators in colleges and universities to develop and hone their leadership skills in order to success are addressed. The nature of leadership is analyzed from the observation that most people aspire to influence, or, more directly, to power. A two-dimensional leadership grid is provided to help illustrate that leadership behavior is an intermingling of several factors encompassing directing and supporting functions. Seven propositions on probable differences in mid-level positions from those of senior officials are offered along with ideas on differing leadership emphases. Suggestions are also made of the steps that middle-management leaders and their staffs can take to enhance leadership skills. Contains 16 references. (GLR)

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LEADERSHIP IN MIDDLE ADMINISTRATON

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This paper was presented at the Thirtieth Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research held at The Galt House, Louisville, Kentucky, May 13-16, 1990. This paper was reviewed by the AIR Forum Publications Committee and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with the research of higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC Collection of Forum Papers.

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ABSTRACT

The thesis of the paper is that middle-level administrators need to develop and hone their leadership skills in order to succeed in middle management. One of the points made in this paper is the pervasiveness of the desire (need) to influence others. By encouraging this desire among subordinates, middle-level administrators can fan a flame that may already be burning to help develop leadership. The subordinate benefits from finding that he/she can have an impact; the organization may well benefit from initiatives that might not otherwise emerge and from the development of a cadre of personnel with leadership skills. The paper suggests steps that middle-management leaders and their staffs can take to enhance leadership skills.

Leadership in Middle Administration

Middle-level administrators -- whoever and wherever you may be -- can you identify with a poem by Tennyson, popular in an earlier day, entitled Change of the Light Brigade? It goes in part:

Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die.

The middle-level administrator caught between senior management and the remainder of the organization will naturally assume a Janus-like stance. I contend in this paper that the tasks expected differ, and as a consequence the leadership provided by these middle-level administrators will also vary. The organization is well served that has leadership at all levels; typically the individual also will benefit.

Leadership materials abound. Bennis (1985) assures us that over 350 definitions exist for leadership and several thousand references are available. The military and corporate areas stress leadership. In the post-secondary education field, books and articles appear from the perspective of the president or chief operating officer. Leadership in middle administration in education, especially higher education, receives much less attention. This paper focuses on leadership at this "middle" level, and in truth is influenced from the perspective of being a participant for some thirty years in middle-level administration in universities, and from the viewpoint of a major general with a peacetime command that extended across three states and a mobilization command with forces from the National Guard, the Army Reserves, and the U.S. Army.

FOCUS OF CURRENT TOPIC

In order to review leadership in middle administration, two preliminary steps appear important: first, to review previous writings that appear particularly applicable to the topic, and second to discuss other ideas related to leadership in general that also apply to middle administration.

Two authors popular at this time who specialize in leadership in colleges and universities are Warren Bennis (for example, 1985) and James Fisher (for example, 1984). Their interest is heavily

directed to the activities of senior administrators. The military stresses leadership throughout its vast educational system, and in many, many publications[1]. The educational community, however, owes a tip of the hat to Cameron Fincher (1987) who recently reduced the topic of administrative leadership to a highly readable 44 pages. That article should be considered a must for a person who wishes to pursue the topic further. The book by Henry Mintzberg (1973), however, is also important for the person who would understand the field. Mintzberg, who reviews what constitutes the work of a manager, identifies 10 roles -- leadership is one of them (others are figurehead, liaison, monitor, disseminator, spokesman, entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator, and negotiator) (Mintzberg, pp. 92-93).

One initial observation is that terminology is as obscured as the landscape on a foggy morning in the mountains. What, for example, is an appropriate generic name for the person who heads a middle-level operation in an institution of higher education? Is this person a manager, an executive, an administrator, a director, a department head, or a leader, or is it leadership that we expect from this manager/executive/administrator/director or whatever in conducting the affairs of the operation? Mintzberg (1973) uses the title of manager whom he defines as a person who maintains the organization in its operation, that is, helps to move the operating process. The manager, thus, provides the structural framework for operating the unit. This paper follows the lead of Fincher and uses the term *administrator* to identify the person who has a primary role in some part of an organization -- but administrators, and managers as used by Mintzberg, are interchangeable for purposes of this paper. At times a convenient way to identify such an individual is to ask whether this person oversees a budget, and is the person responsible for personnel decisions for his/her area? And what are the workers or staff of this administrator called? In this paper the term subordinate is used, but that term is not truly descriptive in higher education where subordinates of an administrator see themselves more as associates or colleagues. The term dynamic subordinacy is at times used (Nida, 1989). In any event an administrator uses leadership as one of his/her roles to accomplish the mission, activity, and role of a unit within the organization. What then is leadership? Leadership constitutes the interpersonal relationships that help to motivate and activate the subordinates.

NATURE OF LEADERSHIP

Out of the vast amount of material on leadership, a few items stand out as being particularly relevant to the present discussion. First of these is the observation that most people aspire to influence, and influence is another way of saying power. Fisher (1984, p.8) contends that influence is a polite term for power. Kipnis (as cited by Fisher, 1984, p. 9) writes: "Mental health and self satisfaction are connected with position." He contends that people like to be in charge. Power or leadership is a pervasive force in society. Another reinforcement to this argument comes from Fisher citing Katz (1973, p. 8):"...leaders are simply people who are more consistently powerful than others -- everyone attempts to be influential." It does not require the insight of the authors cited above, however, to see influence occurring. Look at the youth who seeks to influence a parent to permit him use of the family car or the spouse seeking to promote ideas to the partner on the vacation to take or not take, appropriate clothes to wear, or how best to discipline a child. Influence or power helps to motivate individuals to accept administrative positions. A similar desire causes their subordinates also to seek change in the direction (or the approach or whatever) of the administration or the organization. If the individual is limited in the ability to influence in a given area, he/she may well seek to exert influence in another area. Why this urge for power? Fisher contends it is a "need" of the individual (Fisher, p.54).

When one considers basic needs, the writings of Maslow immediately come to mind. Maslow developed a hierarchy of motivational needs that extend from physiological (for example, the need for food), through safety, belongingness and love needs, esteem, to a final category of self-actualization. Presumably, the urge for power fits within the esteem or self-actualization categories, however, it could exist at any level -- it certainly accompanies ego in whatever category that falls. Maslow contends that a higher-level goal emerges while the individual is still seeking to fulfill a lower-order goal. It is with a discussion of a hierarchy of needs that one frequently leaves the ideas of Maslow. The key observation, however, comes later: the individual continues to commit the same <u>amount of effort</u> to pursue these needs but at a higher level. Maslow contends that if a person is no longer pursuing the need of social well-being the same interest and intensity of pursuit now shifts to the goal of self-esteem. This part of Maslow's theory, frequently overlooked, suggests that the individual will continue to agitate for his/her ideas and seek to influence others, in short, to al-

ways look for new goals or objectives. This agitation -- that is, desire to change -- can be at any of Maslow's levels.

If this theory is brought down to the level of middle administrators, the middle administrator will have a desire to influence; moreover, the subordinates of this individual will also have a similar desire. Theory, therefore, suggests that the potential to influence and lead is ever-present and awaits to be tapped, encouraged, or otherwise allowed to develop. The individual will usually desire to have an influence on people or events (this desire being a part of Maslow's higher-level goals for the fulfillment of the individual). If you seek to influence in some area and receive continued rebuffs, do you still try? Perhaps not, but influence may be exerted elsewhere. Perhaps influence (power) may be seen as a continuum of intensity: from an Alexander the Great who would conquer a kingdom to a Walter Mitty who waits for a spouse and fantasizes over adventures that will never be.

When looking at the leadership of administrators, a dichotomy emerges. On the one hand are the personal factors required, such as intelligence, dependability, persistence, know-how, or self-confidence and self-esteem (Fincher, 1987, p. 165). On the other hand are the factors the leader utilizes to cause the unit to meet its objectives satisfactorily. The Ohio State Leadership Studies of some forty years ago provided a two-dimensional means to review leadership: personal factors (such as those above) and process factors (the elements that permit a task to be accomplished) (Stogdill, 1959).

The personal factors appear to cluster into the areas of "capacity, achievement, responsibility, participation, and status" (Fincher, p. 165 citing Stogdill). The process factors represent what the leader does to keep the organization moving (for example, assign tasks, enforce procedures). Leadership, thereby, becomes a "relationship between people in social situations" (Fincher, p. 16).

What the leader does, that is his/her behavior, to lead is not always clear, for how do you separate routine administrative actions from leadership? Is the difference an issue of emphasis (for example, if the development of a budget is administrative, is the quest for a new position and the tactics necessary to obtain it an example of leadership)? The leader, Hemphill stresses, will ensure that membership in the unit is "a satisfying experience" and will facilitate actions of the group as

a unit (Hemphill, 1956). In order to accomplish these objectives, Hemphill (1956), contends that the leader will:

1. Exhibit behavior indicative of ability to advance purpose.

2. Display "competence in administrative functions."

3. "Inspire members to greater activity."

4. Help members to feel secure.

5. Make decisions, but not necessarily too quickly.

The Ohio State two-dimensional model (personal factors and process factors) brings out clearly that several factors are intermingled in the study of leadership. A two-dimensional model has been widely popularized by Blake, Mouton, and Williams (1981, p. 12). Blanchard Training and Development, Inc., offers a popular self-administered form entitled *Leader Behavior Analysis* (1985). The leadership grid, that appears in Figure 1, illustrates the concept, and a person in a leadership position may well wish to obtain the requisite questions and find where he/she fits on the grid.

Supporting Behavior[a]	Directive Behavior[b]	
	High Supportive Low Directive (Supporting) C	High Directive High Supportive (Coaching) B
	Low Supportive Low Directive (Delegating) D	High Directive Low Supportive (Directing) A

[a]Blake *et al.* calls it concern for people

[b]Blake, *et al.* calls it concern for institutional performance

Figure 1. A two-dimensional leadership grid.

The concept expressed in Figure 1 illustrates in part an overlap of personal and process factors. Think, for example, of a recruit entering basic training (boot camp). The stereotype of this situation appears in Cell A: in a high-directive environment a trainee is told what to do, when to do it, and how to do it; the trainee may feel a lack of personal support from those in charge. The leaders conducting the basic training may believe they are operating in Cell B with a high-direction environment but with sufficient safeguards in health, safety, and overview to make the process high supportive. In Cell D, on the other hand, the subordinate and leader may decide what needs to be done (or the subordinate acting independently may decide), and the activity moves forward with a minimum of supervision (directing) or personal support -- take care of yourself and your personal needs. In Cell C the leader provides extensive support/praise/concern; however, little directive be-

havior or concern is displayed for institutional performance. Suffice it to say here that the maturity of the subordinates in the unit may well influence the leadership style of the administrator. A leader in a unit with experienced workers who know their jobs and require little direction may deliberately seek to be in the top left or bottom left side of the grid. It depends on the situation -- which, of course, is a tenet of leadership.

Research tells us that expectations change within a particular situation by level of administrative complexity (Fincher, citing Stogdill *et al.*, 1955). The masterful senior administrator may not be as successful in a mid-level administrative position -- the reverse also holds. Various responsibilities at the mid-level and senior-administrative positions may bring different performance. Boyatzis (1982) reports, in surveys of 12 organizations with over 2,000 people in 41 managerial positions, the middle administrators differed from the senior managers in these areas (the significant appears in the parentheses): developing others (.064); logical thought (.083); positive regard or belief in others (.012); self-control (.006); spontaneity (.014). Conversely, the senior administrators scored higher on self-confidence (.016).

In another look at differences, the lower and mid-level managers were characterized by numerous personal contacts but of brief duration. The middle administrators also report spending more time with personnel in other parts of the organization than with their own subordinates (Sayles, 1964).

Let us recap ideas from theory and research. Theory suggests that individuals seek to influence others -- the degree of influence exerted obviously varies. Maslow contends that the quest for change (to become better?) will continue -- each change or new acquisition leads to a desire for more. The leader and the subordinates react to each other in a kaleidoscope of ever-changing images as influence (power) is used. The leader will be successful to the extent that he/she can provide an environment in which the subordinate wants or at least is willing to work and can cause actions that help to produce the work. While leadership activities will be expected across a total organization, Stogdill (1955) was concerned with how the demands of the job influence behavior. Administrative leadership is different in middle-level administration as a result of differing job requirements.

It is easy to become ensnared in the pictures and logic of the theorists and miss what may be the practical applications of such theory to leadership in middle administration. It would seem that theory is present to support the following ideas:

1. Middle administrators and their staffs desire opportunities for leadership, just as senior administrators employ and use leadership.
2. Leadership works best when fitted to the needs of the individuals being led and the capabilities of the leader -- for example, high-directive versus low-directive supervision or leadership. The leadership required to permit the trainee to finish basic training satisfactorily will differ significantly from a middle-level administrator with subordinates who have worked for him/her in the same office for 10 years.
3. The proper environment will let leadership talents grow and expand (that is, let subordinates exert influence), and the subordinate and middle administrator, as a consequence, will be happier (regardless of whether promotion to higher administrative/leadership positions occurs).

This next section offers seven propositions on probable differences in mid-level positions from those of senior officials and provides ideas on differing leadership emphases.

ISSUES FOR MIDDLE ADMINISTRATORS

Challenges to Middle Administrators: Supporting Behavior (people).

1. Middle administrators will be in closer proximity to their subordinates. While the CEO may be able to retain some distance from the day-to-day activity of an organization and still exude the aura of a leader who is in charge (Fisher, 1984), the middle administrator is in the same room or in immediate proximity to the staff. His/her actions are quickly known or observed. Middle administrators live in a goldfish-bowl environment; while the administrator may have some power over his/her staff, that power does not extend far outside his/her office. For that matter, it may not even extend to the subordinates, who know this person extremely well, and know what kind of power he/she does or does not exert in the organization. The mantle of

leader does not automatically fall on the middle-level administrator. The senior administrator, therefore, is not under the same day-to-day scrutiny as the middle-level administrator.

2. The competent middle administrator has a better opportunity to encourage initiative of subordinates and in turn to help develop their leadership abilities. The CEO or top administrators seldom have time to develop leadership qualities in subordinates. While such individuals treasure initiative, they have little time to foster leadership. Here the middle administrator plays an important role. It falls to the middle administrator to encourage the preparation, the initiative, and the hard work necessary to develop leadership skills. This implies that the administrator seeks to become more directive in developing leadership skills (which at first glance appears a contradiction) while serving as a cheerleader for the staff member who is engaged in leadership activity. It also implies urging the staff member to remain alive professionally and continue to pursue knowledge and self-improvement, for knowledge is a prerequisite for leadership.

3. The middle administrator and staff build a professional image on an expert knowledge in their area of activity. The CEO and senior officers of the institution have limited time to become expert in any one area. Senior administrators live in an environment wherein the affairs of that day must receive attention. They may read extensively, but the reading will be on multiple topics. The middle administrator and his/her staff, however, can pursue a topic in depth and, in fact, become the expert on it. The influence of the middle administrator and the staff depends in large measure on the extent to which an expert knowledge is acquired and needed in a given area. (If the expert knowledge is in an area not deemed of benefit, it is incumbent upon the individual with such knowledge to show carry-over benefits. Knowledge is power and power is influence.)

Challenges to Middle Administrators: Directive Performance (institutional performance).

4. The middle administrator will seldom have as much of the big picture as top management. When a problem arises wherein more information is needed, it may be difficult and even awkward to extract it. Moreover, other officers of the organization may not take the time or effort to be of assistance. The administrator will have to press on until the tools (data, for example) are obtained for a job.

5. The middle administrator seldom knows the extent of his/her authority. When tested it may quickly develop that the responsibility is there, but the authority is elsewhere. When senior authority figures fail to back the middle administrator, the likelihood for shell-shock or for extremely tender feelings to develop are intensified. It is a truism that the middle manager seldom has the authority needed for all activity. Yet, both responsibility and authority are best understood by testing their limits.

6. The middle administrator and his/her staff can frequently seize the initiative in power vacuums to work for the common good and also to win influence. Serving as an executive secretary for a committee or ad-hoc task force appears far from the "honor" of serving as chair. Yet, it is the executive secretary who frequently writes or edits the committee report. Herein, opportunities for leadership and the ability to influence are found. Leadership opportunities thus emerge that would otherwise be denied.

7. Certain positions carry power with them. There is expectation, for example, that the person in the role of CEO will cause something to happen (Fisher, 1984). With leadership expected, the leader is under pressure to display it; the subordinates expect to follow this leadership (direction, approach, etc.). And what is expected of middle administration -- leadership to accomplish a steady flow of work. When leadership is not present, staff members who are intent on a mission or accomplishing work may well circumvent normal chains of command to go directly to a higher level. However, this situation may also be a procedure that helps to develop staff members for other leadership opportunities.

Leadership Roles. Given the possible differences in middle-level administration opportunities, what do we expect from the administrator in a leadership role? Using the personal factor and process factor matrix, I suggest four expectations as the key to each type of factor.

Personal Factors.

1. Thorough technical knowledge of area (know the job). (While the administrator does not have to know every job, neither subordinates nor senior administrators will accept a lack of knowledge.)

2. Willingness to develop subordinates (provide appropriate raises, promotions, leadership opportunities, development opportunities).

3. Treat fairly each subordinate (avoid harassment or favoritism and lead others to perform in a similar manner.

4. Display self-confidence (look and act the part of a leader).

Process Factors.

5. Delegate responsibility to subordinates and permit them flexibility and encourage initiative when approaching a task. This implies a willingness to permit mistakes and allow more time on an activity than might otherwise be required.

6. Make a decision and usually hold to it.

7. Integrate activities and resources to operate the unit, using resources as necessary to accomplish tasks (including planning and operating).

8. Follow-up on subordinates sufficiently to permit them to know that high standards are expected and appreciated.

The personal and process factors listed above could apply to leadership opportunities at all levels of the organization (including middle-level administrators). Given different expectations in job levels and performance of middle-level administrators, the personal and process factors employed by middle administrators become a matter of degree or emphasis employed. I suggest that middle administrators can place more emphasis on Factors 1, 2, 7, and 8 than senior officers.

The factors frequently are combined; for example, it may be difficult to determine where a thorough technical knowledge (#1) stops and a willingness to delegate responsibility (#5) (which implies knowledge on the part of a subordinate) takes its place. The middle-level administrator, however, is in a better position than the senior administrator to have the technical knowledge and to be able to take the time to help the subordinate successfully complete a task. After all, he/she knows the strengths and weaknesses of the subordinate, can ensure that resources are available for the assignment, and can serve as a sounding board, if required, by the subordinate. While the senior-level administrator can doubtless render similar assistance, as a matter of fact, other duties and responsibilities prevent it from happening. Numerous combinations of the eight factors are possible -- the point is that herein an administrator interacts with subordinates to accomplish the operation of a unit within an organization.

DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP

Scott believes that senior-level administrators have not yet moved to develop their mid-level staffs (Scott, 1978). While Scott's contention may have justification, it does not benefit us to wring our hands and worry about what others fail to do. Leadership is both art and science. One learns it from applicable reading, study, or observation of others performing in the role, and finally by practice (Wickham, 1984).

One of the points made in this paper is the pervasiveness of the desire (need) to influence others. By encouraging this desire among subordinates, middle-level administrators can fan a flame that may already be burning to help develop leadership. The subordinate benefits from finding that he/she can have an impact; the organization may well benefit from initiatives that might not otherwise emerge and from the development of a cadre of personnel with leadership skills. While such development may produce negative results (for example, the subordinate uses new-found skills to

replace the mid-level administrators), positive results emerge to the extent the subordinate enjoys new roles and responsibilities.

Middle administrators in developing leadership might keep in mind the following admonitions:

1. A series of successes, though any one may be rather minute in itself, can be of extreme importance -- it is not necessary to wait for the one great opportunity!

2. Leadership can be encouraged in areas outside the immediate work place, for after all, a carry-over influence can certainly be expected. Participation in such activity as professional organizations, civic groups, religious groups, or unions, at the local or even wider area can lead to opportunities for leadership.

3. Reinforcement is just as important to the thirty-year veteran as to the office neophyte. If you want to develop leadership, it is necessary to encourage it and permit it to emerge.

The fastest growth in higher education is now taking place in the administration.[3] Little evidence exists that organized efforts will take place on campuses to prepare or to keep administrators up-to-date on management and leadership skills. As mid-level managers better understand their roles and expected interactions across the organization, the individual, his/her unit, and the total organization should benefit.

The mid-level administrators of today and of the future have great opportunities for useful service to their organizations plus having some fun along the way. Mid-level administrators have a better opportunity than senior administrators to spend more time with their subordinates. In the process the mid-level administrator can develop both the people skills and the process skills needed for better leaders. It is not the job of someone else. It is our job!

NOTES

[1]For example, see Field Manual 22-100, Military Leadership; FM 22-103, Leadership and Command at Senior Levels; FM 25-100, Training the Force.

[2]Fincher (1987) provides topologies of what leaders do or what identifies them.

[3] The Chronicle of Higher Education, March 28, 1990, reports a ten-year growth in faculty of 5.9 percent and a growth of staff of 17.2 percent. The category of "other professional" increased by 61.1 percent.

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